Chasing After Love

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Chasing After Love

By aquaturtle66

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Chapter 1

Chasing After Love (Chap. 1)

Chapter 1

"Angle you can't be serious, you have finally lost it."

I laughed, "I am not Jasmine, admit it, that boy is h-o-t."

Jasmine shook her head, "Okay, so maybe Keith is a little hot, but it's not like he is going to ever give us the time of day." Keith was the star soccer player and we were ogling him as he hung out with his friends in the front of the school.

"And why not?" I challenged my best friend, "We are just as fine as those sluts that he usually has hanging

on him, hell, we've got it going on!" To tell the truth, Jasmine, with her mocha-colored skin, brown eyes, shinny black hair, and a model figure, she did have it going on. I, on the other hand, was more of a tall blonde princess type, I looked fragile and had long blonde hair that cascaded down my back, sky blue eyes, and I was so skinny that I almost looked anorexic.

She laughed, "If you say so, but come on, we are going to be late." I pretended to huff and followed after her. I wanted to be an actor so I loved to play different parts, to be different people, it was so exhilarating.

I shifted my heavy backpack to my other shoulder and entered the building. Preble was a large school, one of the largest high schools in Green Bay, Wisconsin, it was huge and had a confusing layout, but after a month, it was possible to get around without getting to terribly lost. I still got lost though. It was November of my freshman year, everything was still new, still confusing. It was a whole different world from middle school. You might never see the

same people in the hallway more than once and even though you had hundreds of people go to your middle school, you still might not know a single person in your classes.

I was lucky to have four of my eight classes with Jasmine, well three if you don't count lunch as class. Jasmine was having issues lugging around her backpack, she was short, so the thing was almost larger than her. It was kind of a funny thing to see.

No, I am not being mean, but Jasmine was one of those people who hated to be alone, she usually had a boyfriend three weeks after she broke up with the last one. Currently, she hadn't one, so she was stuck carrying around her own backpack. "Jaz, why don't you go flirt with that guy over there," I said pointing to one of the muscular guys in a varsity football jersey, "I think that he could handle his bag and yours, hell maybe he could take mine too."

Jasmine laughed again. "I don't flirt with just any guys, and plus, I don't date guys on the football team, they aren't very smart, all they do it get whatever brains they have knocked out of them."

I frowned. "That is very stereotypical, my brother played football and he's smart, he is at the top of his class at Harvard."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, come on, we need to hurry, I don't want to be late for study hall again," she stressed as we headed up to our lockers on the second floor in the hallway that was furthest from everything except for the health rooms which both of us had already taken last year in middle school.

"Miss Soule, Miss Davids, care to explain why you are late to my class?" Mrs. Fields screeched as we entered our study hall late...again.

"Jasmine wanted to get some coffee and then we got lost and-" I started to explain what truly happened, not even bothering to use my acting skills on this teacher, she hated us already.

"That's enough with your excuses Miss Soule, if you and Miss Davids are late for my class one more time, I will give you detention. Now take your seats and get to work."

"Yes Ma'am," we mumbled with our heads down as we made our way to our seats which were on opposite sides of the room from each other. God I hated her! It was just study hall! What difference does it make that you are there; I think that we should be able to just skip that class. But if you skip one time they freak out and call your parents and if my parents heard that I skipped one class, I would be grounded for life.

I put in my MP3 and cranked up the music as loud as it could go. Great start to another great day! Note the sarcasm. Since I had already finished all my homework last night, I took out one of my books that I had taken from my never-ending supply and promptly lost myself in the love story.

That's what I wished for. If I had someone to share my life with, I could but up with this hell-hole and anything else that my life-or karma- wanted to throw at me. But I knew that would never happen, I was too shy, yeah I may have been pretty, but I was too shy to really ever talk to someone and it was obvious when a guy only asked you out because he wanted to get

laid, those were the only guys that seemed to be interested in me. I had never gone out on a date, I know, how sad, a fourteen year old still has never been on a date. But I had standards; I wouldn't break them for anyone, no matter who they were.

I looked up at the clock, five minutes of time left. I was going to go back to reading, but I had the strangest feeling that someone was staring at me. I had paranoia, so this was normal, I usually ignored it, but this was stronger than I usually felt it. I looked to my left and in the front left corner of the room was a boy staring at me. His blonde hair was hanging lazily before his eyes and those jade green eyes were boring into mine. I stared back, confused at his intent gaze and he suddenly whipped his head around seeming embarrassed.

I thought about it for a moment, I hadn't seen him before, it was only the second month of school, so I might not have noticed him, or he could have been new. One thing that I was sure of was that I hadn't seen him before.

The bell rang and I shook myself out of my abstraction. "Ready to go?" Jasmine asked me cheerfully as she bounded over to my desk. I just glared at her. She sighed, "You're still mad at me making you late again, aren't you?" I didn't answer and that seemed to drive her nuts. "Please Angel, please, I am sorry, next time I won't drag you along with me, but please don't be mad at me. Come on, you can't be mad at your best friend, it's like against the law or something."

I continued to glare at her. "I forgive you, but if you cause me to be late for another class again, I will personally be filing you missing person's report for when I kill you and throw your corpse into a ditch somewhere."

She shivered. "That was creepy; you are way too good at acting."

I beamed at her and curtsied. "Why thank you, now let's get to language." We were the only ones in the classroom except for the teacher and that kid who had been staring at me today; he was getting something signed by Mrs. Fields.

"Okay everything is taken care of Mr. Marcellus, now your art room is right down, there, she said pointing in the general direction of the room, have a nice first day," she called as he left. So he was new. We followed his lead and left the room before the five minute passing period was done.

{Author's Note: please vote and tell me what you think. This is different from my normal style of writing becuse it isn't about anything super natual, this is more based on my life than anything. I just changed around a few names and added a guy who would change how things worked. If you don't like it, tell me and I will stop writting this story, i was just kind of bored last night and decided to try it and see how it played out.

-Kaite}

Chapter 2

Chasing After Love (Chap. 2)

Chapter 2

"I hate that book," I muttered as we left the language book, "Why is it called 'To Kill A Mockingbird' it has nothing to do with a freaking bird!"

Jasmine laughed. "Hey, I like it so far and besides, she author can call it whatever the hell she wants, if she wants to name it after something that she only fleetingly mentions once, then she can. Have fun in math, I am going to be tortured in tech. ed."

"I love tech. ed. The teacher is awesome, he is so funny."

"Yeah, I like him, but there is like no other girls in that class, only me and another senior girl."

"And that's a bad thing?"

"The guys are scary looking!" she screeched and headed down an adjacent hallway to get to her class and I headed up the stairs to my math class.

I entered the room with my head down and quickly took my assigned seat that was closest to the door. I was a freshman and I was in Advanced Geometry, and advanced sophomore class, there were only two other freshmen in this class with me. I hated this class more than anything. I was normally a happier, frivolous person, but throw me with people that I didn't know, I became deathly shy.

"Hello," I heard a voice say from the side of my desk. My head shot up, no one talked to me in this class, even the freshman that I knew. It was the boy from study hall, the one who was looking at me. "I'm Joey, I'm new here and I noticed that you were in my first hour and I keep getting lost, I was wondering if you could... um... show me around school?"

Time to put my acting skills to the test... I beamed at him, pretending that I was totally at ease, that I wasn't so shy. "I'm Angel, it's nice to met you. I would love to show you around, I got lost for a while too." I still did. I held out my hand and he shook gratefully. Our hands touched and I felt a shock of static electricity. Weird, I thought as he turned away to talk to the teacher and get his papers signed.

The class went quickly, the teacher was good so it didn't take much thought to try to decipher what he meant by half of the stuff that he said. Normally when this class was done, I quickly packed up my stuff and nearly ran down the hall, but it was strange to remember that I had someone to wait for. Joey was at my side seconds after the bell rang. "I have to stop at my locker quick," I told him, already hurrying out into the hallway, he nodded and followed seeming to struggle a little at my pace and my ability to weave in and out of the heavy stream of students heading the other way to their classes.

The one thing that I hated about my schedule was that I always had to run from one end of the school

to another, that and that I was only able to go to my locker before, after third period, and after school. "What class do you have next?" I asked him as my fingers frantically ran through my combination. I dropped to my knees as soon as the door swung open and started to fling the stuff from my backpack into my locker and take out my stuff for my remaining classes.

"Uh, French, in 205."

"Cool, we have that class together," I told him shutting my locker and attempting to get on my heavy backpack without falling over.

"So where did you move from?" I asked him as we head quickly- not running as we practically had to get to my locker so we wouldn't be late for class, but still very fast.

"Montreal, my mom got transferred down here because the she wanted to be closer to her mother in the time that she has left."

I balked and looked at him confused; I shook my head and caught up to him. "What do you mean?"

"My mom has breast cancer; she knows that she is going to die soon, so she wants to make amends while still she can."

"I'm so sorry," I mumbled, "So what's it like in Canada?" I asked changing the subject so we wouldn't start out our friendship at such sad note.

We were laughing as we came into the French room. I headed to my table at the back of the class as he headed up the front to talk to the teacher. I liked French, currently we were in a unit where we had taken a test at the beginning of the year and we just redid the sections that we didn't do well enough on, it was a lot of work for something that was so easy. I also like this class because I was the only one in the room with a desk to myself, I liked my solitude. I still talked to people, but I could still be alone when I wanted to.

"Hey Angel, I guess that I am sitting next to you for this class."

I smiled at him, a true smile this time. I was really starting warm up to Joey; I was able to be more of myself.

Well as much of myself that I showed anyone. Not only did I like acting and was good at it, I had to do it, it was necessary. Everyone expected different of me my parents expect me to be the perfect child, the smart one, who never does anything wrong, and who can do anything, no matter how many things I have to do at once. Teachers think of me as the quiet smart one. My friends at school expect me to be nice and funny and able to remember everything and to be able to know what ever little thing or understand inside jokes that I wasn't even there for. My friends outside of school expect me to be nice, funny, and good with kids, good at everything.

Sometimes I just want to scream leave me the hell alone! I get made fun of all the time for how much I read, for how much I write, but that's my escape. When I do those things, I can escape my world and live in another for a while. I can't be all that they expect me to be, I am just not those things.

People tell me that I have a perfect life. Yeah, I may have a bigger house, but that doesn't mean anything, I have way more expectations to meet than they

probably ever will. I haven't allowed myself to do a lot of things all because I was trying to please everyone else wants, expects but what I want, what I expect of myself.

I want to be myself, but I don't know how. I want to be like one of the characters in my books, one of the characters that I play in a play, to find that one person that will change you, allow you to be whom you truly are, but I am not sure I will ever find them.

I am sad that I will never be able to show Joey what I am really like, but I just can't. I am still trying to show Jasmine what I am really like and I have known her since fourth grade.

"Angle, are you alright?" Joey asked bringing me back to the classroom, to here and now.

I blinked a few times to clear the tears that had started to well in my eyes and put on one of my many façades, the fearless mask. I smiled at him, not a trace of sadness in my face. "Yep, I am fine, since I am done making up all of my work would you like some help?"

He laughed quietly being respectful to all of the kids that were still working. "I came moved from Montreal where French is the official language, I think I will survive."

I wondered why he would be in French two, but then I realized that he was probably like the kids who spoke Spanish at home and took it in school, and easy A. I smiled slightly and got out my romance novel that I hadn't been able to finish in study hall and begin to read it.

Chapter 3

Chasing After Love (Chap. 3)

Chapter 3

"So what class do you have now?" I asked him when the bell rang indicating that French class was now officially over.

"Tech. Ed." Joey answered.

"Cool, that's what I have. What room?"

"145."

"Damn," I muttered smiling, "151 for me. I guess that I still won't know anyone in my class."

"You don't know anyone in your class?" he asked in disbelief.

"Nope, I am the only freshman from my old school in that is in that class and the only other person I talk to is the other girl, and she is a senior."

He nodded thoughtfully. "That sucks," he stated.

I snorted; amused by the blunt way that he had said it. "You got that right." At this point, I had already led him down the foreign language hallway and down the steps that was connected directly to the lunchroom.

"This is a really big school," he murmured, mostly to himself.

I smiled reassuringly. "You get used to it," I half-lied. You did, it just took a couple of weeks. "Well, here's your class," I said stopping at a door. "Bye."

"Bye Angel."

I walked as slow as possible past the last two rooms that would lead me to the engineering design room. I loved working with computers, but this class was always a little disconcerting for me. Jasmine didn't like it because she didn't think the boys were hot enough for her to use as a distraction as the teacher

talked, I didn't like this class because every time I talked, they would all whip their heads around to stare at me.

I may have wanted to be an actor, I didn't have stage fright or anything, but I didn't particularly like guys staring at me. Well at least how some of these guys did, in that sick lustful way. I hid behind my hair and did the class work not even pretending to be sociable.

When the bell rang, I logged off my computer, threw on my heavy backpack, and practically ran out of the room. In my haste, I almost missed Joey coming out of his room. "Hey, lunch next?" I said with a knowing smirk.

"Yeah. How did you know?"

"Because I am a master pickpocket and I reached into your backpack when you weren't looking and dug threw your folders until I found it," I said with an over exaggerated evil laugh thrown onto the end.

He laughed. "No, seriously, how did you know?"

"I wasn't kidding," I said, my face completely serious, I was that good of an actor. He blinked in surprise

and I couldn't help it, I started to laugh, so hard that my sides started to hurt. "You shouldn't trust people so easily," I told him.

"Come on Angel, how did you know?"

"Okay, well there are only three lunch periods," I explained, "hours four, five, and six, and I just happen to know that you have fourth and fifth period because I am just a creepy stalker like that."

He laughed again. "And I take it I had nothing to do with the fact that you lead me to those classes."

I smirked. "Not at all. Do you want to sit with us?"

"Um," he thought about it for a moment, "sure."

"Great," I said brightly, weaving through the throng of tables. "Jasmine, Glenn, Molly, Sierra, Aiden, this is my new friend Joey. He just moved here from Montreal. Joey, this is Jasmine, Glenn, Molly, Sierra, and Aiden," I said gesturing to each one in turn.

"Hey Joey," Glenn said and Aiden nodded. Glenn had curly brown hair and blue eyes while Aiden was bulkier Hispanic guy with short black hair and

brown eyes who was going out with Sierra who was a sweet quiet shinny black haired Asian girl with dark gray eyes.

"Have a special someone back in Canada?" Glenn asked curiously, examining his hot pink nails.

Molly laughed. Her bright hazel eyes dancing with amusement, she pushed her sorrel hair out of her eyes. "Glenn honey, I don't think he is on your team so don't get your hopes up."

I pulled Joey over to the lunch line to save him form the... interesting talk I knew who follow that comment. "Okay, I am confused, explain this to me. Who's team is Glenn playing on and why does it have to do with me dating someone?"

I laughed. "It means that he is gay."

"Oh, that would explain the nail polish."

"Mhm. Word of warning: if he starts to flirt with you, either change the subject or start checking out some random girl."

"How would I know if he is flirting with me?" he asked awkwardly.

"You'll know if he's flirting with you, oh, you'll know alright," I mumbled as turned to smile at the lunch lady who was asking what I wanted.

"You never let him answer my question," Glenn muttered sulkily at me as we came back to the table and sat down next to each other.

"I had a girlfriend," Joey told him, saving me from a lecture, "but we broke up about a month or so ago."

"Oh, what happened?" Jasmine piped up. "Did you two drift apart, did she cheat on you, did you cheat on her...?"

I could tell what she was trying to do and I shot her a dark look. Jasmine loved to play matchmaker, but first she always had to make sure that they were faithful... and that they looked cute together.

He shrugged. "I guess I got too hung up on worrying about my mom and maybe she didn't like it that I wasn't spending every moment with her, I am not sure," he said sadly.

She nodded, he passed her test. "What was happening with your mo-" Jasmine broke off when my glare went from deadly to a warning. She cocked her head slightly to the side.

"What happened to my mom?" Joey guessed the end of my best friend's question. "She was diagnosed with breast cancer about four months ago and we found out about that she isn't responding to treatments very well and she wanted to be down here to be closer to her family."

"Oh my god," Molly exclaimed then rushed around the table to give him a hug. I felt a sharp twinge of jealousy but I felt slightly reconciled when I saw that he looked very uncomfortable with this.

"Do you have any siblings?" the almost silent Sierra asked, steering the conversation to safer paths.

"Oh my god, Joey is so hot!" Jasmine was basically yelling into my ear that night. "You should ask him out, you two look so cute together!"

I blushed and was thankful that this was a phone conversation and she couldn't see that. "I thought it was the guys that asked the girls out..."

"Yeah," she scoffed, "in the last century, but now girls are more independent, we can do what ever guys can do."

I laughed, Jasmine was so... interesting sometimes. "I think that I will leave that privilege for the guys, we can't take all of their thunder." Please, please let her stop pestering me about it.

"Good point," she settled. "So what did you think of the sub for science, she was so creepy! I wish that the regular teacher would just have her baby and come back already!"

I mentally sighed. Thank god for her short attention span. "I know right?" I said, moving to more comfortable grounds.

Jasmine thought of me as fearless. I put on that mask for her a lot. But that was far from who I really was. I hoped that someday I could be me. It was something I craved, something that I needed.

I fell asleep that night with a broken heart that I was hell bent on fixing, even if it was the last thing that I did.

Chapter 4

Chasing After Love (Chap. 4)

Chapter 4

"Morning Angel, Jasmine," Joey greeted us as we headed into study hall the next day.

"Good morning," we both said.

"Are you feeling alright?" Joey asked me, repeating what Jasmine had asked me earlier, "You look a little green."

I took a deep breath and put on my carefree mask. "Yeah, I have a science test today, I didn't study, that's all."

Jasmine frowned. "The only time that I have ever seen you study is for finals, it is still the beginning of the year so why are you freaking out?"

I shrugged. "No clue." Then, to my great relief, the bell rang and Mrs. Fields told us to take our seats. I didn't have any homework and I lied about the test so I didn't have anything that I needed to do.

I did feel sick too. I still felt that mystifying heartbreak that I had felt last night. Why did I still have it? Or better yet, why did I have it at all?

I tried to read my book, but seeing the fairytale of people falling in love just put me over the edge and brought tears to my eyes. "Miss Soule?" I heard the teacher's voice break through my distraction. "Are you alright?" I looked up to see Mrs. Fields by my desk, looking the kindest that I had ever seen her. I shook my head. "Mr. Marcellus?" she asked, "since you have nothing to do, could you please escort Miss Soule to the Nurse?"

Joey nodded and stood up. Just my luck, he would be the one with nothing to do when I was having a break down. He grabbed the hall pass while I shoved

my things in my backpack and headed out the door. Joey met me in the hallway supporting most of my weight by wrapping his arm around my waist.

"Thanks," I mumbled, attempting to stop the tears that were streaming silently down my face. "You don't have to do this you know, I can make it on my own."

He smiled slightly and whipped the tears from my face with his thumb, "every princess needs a knight in shining armor don't they?"

I laughed slightly, "I am not a princess."

"You sure look like one, add a tiara and no one would dispute that."

He kept his arm around my waist all the way to the office, refusing to let go. I am not sure why, but I kind of liked it. "Mrs. Marisol," Joey said as we finally entered the office, "Angel here isn't feeling so well..."

"Oh my," the old lady gasped, "help her over here," she said indicating to a couch in one of the rooms that lead off from the main part of the office, "I will get Mrs. Baker." Mrs. Baker was the Nurse, she was

old but not as old as the receptionist who just went in search oh her.

"Thanks Joey, I owe you one."

"For what?"

"Staying with me."

"Hmm, how about you make it up to me by accompanying me to dinner when you are feeling better?"

I smiled. It was Wednesday today, and I wasn't physically sick, well mostly, I was more emotionally sick. "If I am feeling better by Friday..." I prompted.

"Friday, if you are feeling better," Joey said then the nurse came in and she shooed him out and back to his class.

I ended up leaving before first hour was even out and my mom came to pick me up. I hid myself in my room and cried. There was no real reason for my crying, but I was used to this. With all the façades that I always put up around me, it was easy to become too overwhelmed. I was so many people for

so many different people that I was losing who I am, I didn't know to deal with it. So I just cried.

I cried at all the stress that was on me, the fact that I was hiding who I was to my friends; I just cried at how deep of a whole that I had dug myself. It wasn't even lunch time for them and I already had ten texts from my friends. I lied to all of them saying I just felt very lightheaded and had an upset stomach.

When it was sixth hour at school, I texted Jasmine to have her ask Joey what are math assignment was so that I could made that up tonight. But instead of my best friend answering, I got a text from an unknown number: Are you OK? It's Joey; Jaz gave me your number.

I'll live, I texted back, I am just working thru some things. I h8 it, I feel sick and yet I don't. I'll b back 2moro.

U better b, I think Glenn might b flirting w/ me, I need saving!

I laughed; this was just what I needed to cheer me up. I texted him all throughout lunch and between

him and Jasmine, I was able to figure out what I missed and what homework I had.

My cell phone vibrated and I almost feel off of my bed, it was the only sound in my silent house. "Hello?"

"Angel, its Joey- are you crying."

"No," I lied, but my voice broke.

"Is anyone there? Do you want me to get Jasmine to come over?"

"Don't tell Jaz," I freaked.

"Do you want me to come over? Where do you live?"

I figured that he wouldn't give up so I just told him and he was at my house only minutes later. I tried to wipe the tears off of my face but they kept falling. I gave up and just opened the door. He didn't even waste time with small talk, the second that the door was no longer a boundary, he enveloped me in a hug.

I buried my face in his chest and cried. I really didn't really like breaking down in front of people like this, but with Joey, it was so easy to be myself, which

ironically, was the reason that I was crying. "I am so sorry. I-I never do this."

"Shhh, it's fine. I was almost always in tears when I saw all of the stuff that my mom has to go through, what she still has to go through."

I nodded. Here I was crying worrying about my 'shitty' life when his mother had a terminal disease. "I'm so-" he shook his head so I cut of my apology. "I sure have started you off with a great impression haven't I? So far I have known you all of two days and you already have seen me cry twice."

"Don't worry. It's real, most people wouldn't cry in front of others, just wait until they leave to show what they are feeling, but you don't."

I held back the fresh tears that were threatening to take me again. That was exactly what I did; there was nothing real about me. "Thanks Joey, I owe you more than just the dinner in two days, actually, I haven't eaten dinner tonight and I could make you something if you want."

He smiled ruefully and he looked as if he regretted something. "I already ate."

"Oh okay. Then I will see you at school tomorrow," we stood up from the couch that we were sitting on and I opened up the door for him. "Please don't tell Jasmine about this, let's just keep this our little secret."

"Okay," he said then left. I closed the door and leaned against it, using it to gently lower me to the ground. I couldn't keep acting like I was; it was slowly tearing me apart.

Just like most nights, I fell asleep with my same old broken heart, knowing somewhere in my mind that it would never heal and dry tears on my cheeks.

{Author's Note: sorry if it is such a boring chapter but I wanted to really focus on how hard it is for her to act like someone else-well many different people- all the time and how much it is causeing her to lose herself in the process. This story is mostly based on me so I am trying to get down some of the stuggles that I face, only sometimes i wish that I had my own Joey :)

-Kaite}

Chapter 5

Chasing After Love (Chap. 5)

Chapter 5

"You feeling better today?" Joey asked me at my locker the next day.

"Nope," I said cheerfully. I wasn't lying; I was just making my tone contradict what I was saying. It was so funny to watch the confusion flit across his face.

"You are just something, aren't you?" Joey said with amusement clear in his voice.

"You have to ask?" I said closing my locker and starting the long trek to the other end of the school.

"Aren't you going to wait for Jasmine?"

"And have Mrs. Fields yell at me for being late again? I don't think so."

He pretended to look appalled. "Angel Soule! I can't believe you! You are such a horrible friend!"

I smiled and did a deep curtsy. "Why thank you." Then I thought of the text that he had sent me yesterday. "So did Glenn really try to flirt with you?"

He shuddered. "It was scary as hell!"

"What did he do?" I question. Joey didn't answer. "What did he say?" Joey laughed at my whining but still didn't answer. "Dammit, Joey, tell me."

He didn't answer again so I playfully punched him on the shoulder. "No, you don't get to know. You didn't tell warn me about his flirting so you don't get to know."

"I told you!" I protested.

"You told what to do if he started flirting, not how he flirted. I could probably file for rape if I felt like it. I didn't know that you could be raped with your clothes on!"

I laughed. "Yep, that's Glenn's flirting," I said as we entered our first hour room.

The rest of the week was boring, but I got closer to Joey. He was so lighthearted and he had a personality that made you like him the second that you met him. I told him more about my dysfunctional family that only consisted of me and my mom trying to get by and he told be about the fights that he got into with his little sister. We went back and forth telling each other our life stories. I told him everything about me except for my acting that I did everyday, how I hid myself, Jasmine was still the only one who knew about that and I planned on keeping it that way.

I felt so at ease with Joey, I didn't put up any masks like I normally did, I was just... myself with him, something that I usually never am. I couldn't even be like this with Jasmine, but with Joey, it came as naturally as breathing. It was a nice feeling.

"What are you smiling about?" he asked me during French.

I smiled brightly at him. "Just a... change in... attitude."

Joey smiled back. "And am I the cause of this change?"

"You're a big part of it."

The little comment seemed to make his day. For the rest of the day, he seemed hell-bent on making me laugh. I was laughing constantly as I walked him from French to Tech. Ed. then from Tech. Ed. to lunch. When we dropped off our things at the table, Jasmine was looking at me like I had grown two more heads. I never laughed this much.

Joey went with Molly, Sierra, and Aiden to the sub line, while Jasmine and Glenn pulled me over to the taco line. "He totally likes you," Jasmine whispered loudly.

I rolled my eyes. "He does not, we are just friends."

"Right, and I am straight," Glenn said sarcastically, rolling his eyes. "He totally like you girl!"

"No-"

"Don't doubt the gay guy, honey. I can tell when a guy likes a girl and that boy is all over you."

"He doesn't like me." I was sure of that. Wasn't I? "If he likes me so much then why hasn't he asked me to the fall dance on Friday?"

"He is shy hun!"

"Right," I said doubtfully, "Doesn't see that way to me.

"That's because he likes you," Jasmine said then turned to order her lunch.

Those two must have been on something. Joey so didn't like me. Well as a friend he did, but that didn't count. As he walked me to social studies, I watched him closely, but I honestly didn't see what they meant about him liking me.

My last hour, science, also consisted of Jasmine trying to convince me that Joey liked me. It didn't work. There was no amount of badgering she could do to make me believe that. Guys didn't like me, they only lusted me. Joey didn't seem like one of those guys who would sink that low.

I closed my eyes and sighed. High school sucked!

{Author's Note: sorry it is so short, this chapter is mostly just a filler...

-Katie}

Chapter 6

Chasing After Love (Chap. 6)

Chapter 6

"Miss Soule?" the science teacher, shrieked, "Are you asleep in my class?"

My eyes flew open. "No, Mrs. Hartman, I just have a headache."

Her eyes tightened and she glared at me, but she eventually nodded and went back to her teaching. I didn't get a minute to think about how much my life sucks before I get yelled at? Ugh, what was up with me getting Satan's spawns as teachers? All the other kids got the nice teachers, but I just had to get the ones that naturally hate me.

The rest of eight hour passed without further incident. "It is still true," Jasmine said the second that the bell rang signaling that school had ended.

"Jasmine," I groaned, "You and Glenn haven't left me alone about this since lunch, please, leave me alone. Joey doesn't like me, end of story."

She huffed and followed me out of the room. "You are totally absurd, he li-"

"Why is she absurd?" Joey asked falling into step beside us.

I blushed and looked away. "Jasmine is just over exaggerating like normal; completely disregard anything that she says for, oh, the next week."

Joey looked at both of us confused but didn't comment. Jasmine started a conversation with Joey and it involved us going over to my house tomorrow and when they asked me if I was up for it, I just nodded.

"Are you okay Angel?" Joey asked me, brushing a stray piece of hair from my face. I blinked in surprise.

I sighed. "Nothing," I said turning away from him to open up my locker. It was just us now; Jasmine had already left to catch her bus, while I walked home. I had learned a few days ago that he lived a few blocks away from me, so now he usually walked me home most days.

"I don't think that it is no-" Joey started but he was interrupted.

"Angel," someone yelled from the end of the hall.

I turned to see the captain of the soccer team heading down the hallway towards us. "Keith?" I asked in surprise. It seemed like a lifetime ago when Jasmine and I had been checking him out in front of the school, but in truth, it was about a week and a half ago.

"Angel," he repeated when he reached us. He started to say something else, but then he seemed to notice that there was someone next to me. "Hey man," he said then doing some weird guy handshake, "I'm Keith, nice to meet you."

"Joey," Joey replied with a curt nod. This surprised me, I had never seen Joey in such a dark mood as he was in now, talking to Keith.

Keith turned his bright brown eyes to me. He ignored Joey as he turned back to me. "Hey Angel do you have a date for the dance on Friday?"

My eyes on their own accord flickered towards Joey. He was leaning against the locker seeming totally unconcerned except for the fact his shoulders seemed tenser than usual. Jasmine and Glenn were wrong. It was easy to tell from his expression that he didn't really care what I said, so I answered, "sure."

"Great," Keith beamed then headed back down the hallway.

Okay, that was weird. I turned back to Joey, but he didn't seem able to look at me. "Ready to go?" I asked him. Joey didn't answer, he just headed towards the door and I followed him. He was going to fast that I tripped on my way down the stairs. Joey caught me but let go of me the second that I had my balance back.

He didn't even ask if I was okay. When we got to his street where in the past few days he had taken me the extra two blocks to my house, but today, he just turned down the street without a backwards glance.

"Bye Joey," I called, but he didn't even seem to hear me.

"You did what?!" Jasmine yelled into the phone.

"Keith asked me to the dance in two days and I said yes."

"I can't believe you! Didn't you think about Joey at all?" My ear was starting to hurt from all of her yelling.

"Jaz, he was there, he didn't even seem to care."

"Angel, you are so fucking insensitive! He likes you! He is going to act like he doesn't care just to make you happy! I can't believe you! You broke the poor guy's heart. You are so fucking insensitive!"

"Jasmine! He doesn't even like me!" I screamed back at her. "He didn't even care. I could have made-out with the guy and he probably wouldn't even have

cared. It's not like I am going out with Keith anyway, we are just going to the dance together, it's no big deal."

I could almost see her roll her eyes ever the phone. "Trust me, he cares. Did he talk to you when he walked you home, even look at you?"

I froze when I realized the truth of her words. He did seem strangely distant, but that could have meant anything. "So?"

"Tell me, did he seem alright when we were all talking in the hall? He was laughing and smiling and he couldn't seem to keep his eyes off of you. He likes you, you dumbass, get it through your thick skull! Dammit, you hurt him! I can't believe you!"

"I didn't hurt him," I said in a small voice. I couldn't have. No boy actually liked me for me, they followed their groin, they didn't like me.

"Yeah, tell me that tomorrow." And with that, she hung up.

My cell phone slipped through my fingers. Joey didn't even like me so how could I have made such a big

mess out of something that wasn't anything at all? I fell asleep that night more confused than I had ever been.

I didn't walk to school with Joey the next day; to be honest I didn't even see him first period either. Jasmine was talking to me, but it didn't go much further than a curt 'hi' and then us walking to class together. If Joey showed up at all that day, I didn't see him.

At lunch, Glenn wouldn't talk to me either, so I guess Jasmine had told him what happened. The others just looked between us three like we were all walking around wearing monkey suits. This was our first real fight that we had ever gotten into.

"Hey Angel," Molly asked. "Where's Joey? I didn't see him in second hour today." Molly and Joey had gym together that period.

I shrugged. "He was acting a bit weird yesterday; I guess that he is home sick."

Glenn glared at me. "Or some insensitive, heartless person hurt him and he is at home nursing his broken heart."

They all once again looked between us three trying vainly to figure out what was going on, but my face showed no emotion while Jasmine and Glenn's faces showed only anger towards me.

I was ignored by them the rest of the day. Sierra and Molly kept pestering me about what out fight was about, but I told them nothing.

On the walk home, I passed Joey's street, I could swear that I felt someone watching me. I shivered and turned around. I saw a movement out of the corner of my eye and when I followed it, I saw Joey's house. My eyes swept the neighborhood one more time, but I shook it off and continued on my way home.

I didn't believe that Joey was hurt just because I said yes to Keith, but I was still worried about him the same.

Chapter 7

Chasing After Love (Chap. 7)

Chapter 7

My mom dropped me off at the mall and I headed into the food court to meet up with my friends. I found Molly, Sierra, Jasmine, and Glenn all waiting for me at a table for me. Then we started our dress shopping. I groaned, I hated this, but since Glenn couldn't wear a dress, I happened to be his Barbie Doll. I wore whatever dress he threw at me. I was nice to see that Jasmine and Glenn had forgiven me a little bit, but maybe it was because they wouldn't let me ruin their favorite pastime.

We were able to find Sierra's dress first. She found a simple strapless black dress that ended just above her knees and had a silver beaded design on her chest. We went into another dress store and we found Jasmine's dress, it was an olive green that went along nicely with her skin tone, it was strapless also and had a sweetheart neckline, and it ended at about mid-thigh and the torso of the dress was very curve friendly, and once it hit her waist, it flared out with many layers, making it look similar to a ballerina's tutu.

Glenn was starting to get a little annoyed at me, he had made me try on about twenty dress so far and we still hadn't found anything that both of us liked. I was kind of glad that Molly wasn't having much luck either, but that changed quickly. She found one dress and was jumping up and down before she even tried it on. "It's perfect," she said then almost ran into the changing room to try it on. She came out a minute later and spun around for us. "What do you think?"

It was a pale pink halter dress with two layers, one plain pink and form fitting, the other frilly and see-

through with triangular slits cut into the bottom that let it frill out when she spun, it also had a jeweled design where the front of the dress met the skirt at the bottom. It somehow reminded me of a fairy's dress that I had seen in all of my children's books. "You look drop-dead gorgeous girl," Glenn said and Molly beamed at him.

"I am not sure what I want to give you a horrible dress to scare Keith or an amazing dress to knock Joey off of his feet," Glenn whispered to me as we waited for the girls to finish checking out Molly's dress.

"I don't even like Keith that much and Joey doesn't like me anymore than a friend. So it doesn't matter."

Glenn ignored me. "I got it. The dress will be perfect and you will make up to Joey."

"How do you even know that he is going?" I countered.

He smirked. "Oh, he will be, don't worry about it."

I tried to comment, but just then, they were done. "Come on Angel," Molly said brightly, "It's your turn."

I groaned and looked up at the ceiling. "Why do you hate me?" I asked to the sky. No answer. I take that as a yes, I am hated. Jasmine grabbed my hand and pulled me to the last store that sold dresses.

"Do you like him?" Jasmine demanded, stopping me from entering the store.

"Like who?"

She shot me a look that said are-you-honestly-that¬-stupid? "They guys that you viciously tore his heart out."

"He doesn't like me," I said in a small voice. "Joey doesn't like me like that."

"Just answer the damn question."

I sighed. "Yes," I mumbled.

"What was that?" Jasmine said leaning in closer to hear me. She was defiantly mocking me.

"Yes."

"Hmmm, I can't hear you."

"Yes, Jasmine, yes, I like him. But. He. Doesn't. Like. Me. Back! So, tell me that he likes me all you want, but it isn't true. Whenever someone loves you, they end up leaving. I loved my dad and he left me." I know there were tears in my eyes, but my expression was calm, I felt horrible. I turned away from Jasmine and walked into the store.

"Here, I think-" I didn't let him finish. I grabbed the dress out of Glenn's hands and put it on.

It was a strapless, light blue floor-length mermaid style dress that was covered in clear gems and hugged my curves. When I came out, all of their mouths were hanging open. "That's per-"

"I'll get it," I interrupted Sierra. They nodded.

I went back into the changing room, I was changed within seconds. I didn't say anything as we checked out and no one commented.

We went to a few more stores and I put on another mask. I pretended to be happy, I laughed and smiled, but I felt none of it. Molly and Glenn were both riding home with Sierra, so they left before Jasmine

and I. My mask slipped as soon as they were out of sight. My eye dropped to the table and I hide behind my hair.

Jasmine rested her hand on mine. "I'm sorry Angel." I didn't comment. "Angel Soule, what do I have to do to get you to forgive me?"

"Don't bring it up again," I said, knowing that she would know what I am talking about.

"Angel, he is not like your dad, not everybody leaves."

"All guys are the same, they all want one thing, and then they leave you. It is as simple as that. My dad beat me, and then took advantage of me. I won't ever get that close to anyone with a y chromosome again, they are all the same."

Jasmine glared at me. "That isn't true, Joey isn't like that, he is-"

"Different? Yeah, you may think that, but I don't." I saw my mom pull up then and I walked away from Jasmine.

"Are you alright baby girl?" my mom asked me when I got into the car.

"I am fine mom," I lied. "I am just thinking about my dress. It is perfect you know." Somehow I was able to get her to forget about what she saw before I pulled my expression together and onto the topic of clothes.

I went home and sat on my bed. Joey had come to school today, but he hadn't talked to me or really acknowledged me beyond a curt nod when I said hello to him in French class. I didn't see him at lunch either. It was Thursday so the dance was tomorrow night.

I was attempting to do my homework when I got a text. I was so out of it that the sudden noise caused me to jump and fell to the floor.

U going to the dance?

It was a text from Joey. My heart seemed to catch in my chest. Yes, I replied back hastily, R u?

I think so. I don't think it will b very fun thou.

Please, for me?

It was a few minutes before the reply came. I will, but only 4 u.

I smiled, I hadn't really wanted to go to the dance in the first place, but now, this might be fun. At least the weird mood that Joey had been in had finally passed and he was talking to me again. Too bad all guys were the same though.

{Author's Note: sorry it was so boring, again. I just needed another filler, the next one will be more interesting, I promise! Please comment and vote.

-Katie}

Chapter 8

Chasing After Love (Chap. 8)

Chapter 8

"Angel? Angel Soule? Angel Marie Soule?" I heard someone whisper in my ear.

"My middle name is not Marie," I groaned, sound barely passing my lips. "It is Adina."

"Well then, Angel Adina Soule, if you don't get up right now, Madame Baret will make you spend time with her after school and you will miss the dance tonight."

I groaned, again it was quietly. "I don't think that is such a bad thing."

"Don't like dancing?" he guessed.

I finally lifted my head off of our French table to look at Joey. "No, I love dancing, I did it all the time as a kid and I still dance all the time with my mom, it's just," I bit my lip.

"What?" he urged.

"I have a little bit of stage fright," I admitted sheepishly.

"It is dark, kind of, and everyone will be dancing. It is no big deal."

"I am still not sure that I could do it. I once had a dancing recital when I was six and I fell off of the stage and everyone started to laugh at me, I've been terrified of going in front of people ever since."

He laughed and Madame Baret stopped in mid lecture to glare at him. "Excuse-moi. Est-se qu'il y a quelque chose que vous souhaitez partager avec la class, Monsieur Marcellus?" Is there something that you would like to share with the class Mr. Marcellus?

"Non, Je suis désolé, Madame." No, I am sorry, Madame. The teacher didn't reply but just glared at him and turned back to her lesson with a huff. A few kids snickered.

I hit him on the shoulder. "One," I whispered in his ear, "you just pissed off one of the strictest teachers in the school, and second, you deserved a lot more than that for laughing at me."

"I wasn't laughing at you," he explained, "I was just surprised that you would let one silly mistake like that have such a big impact on your life. That just doesn't seem like something you would do with your personality."

Yes I would, I thought, you just don't know the real me. No one does.

I was quiet the rest of the lesson and I actually pretended that I was listening to the lesson. The bell rang and he started to collect his things.

"Okay," I said, waiting for him to finish packing up.

"Okay what?"

"I decided that you are right. If I love dancing so much, then I shouldn't let one mistake in the past hold me back," I bit my lip again.

"I'll help you get over it," Joey promised, seeing the slight fear in my eyes. "My mom taught me to dance when I was younger, but she couldn't get into too advanced of moves because she was sick all of the time before we found out about the cancer."

I nodded. "That is amazing to me," I mumbled talking to myself.

"What does?"

"Oh," I blushed. I guess that he heard that. "It's just that it hasn't even been a half a year yet and you talk about it like it has been this way for as long as you remember."

He shrugged. "When things change, you either have to get used to them fast or get left behind. That is just the way it is."

That was the first time that I have ever heard Joey talk that way. He was sad but wise at the same time, he didn't sound like a fourteen year old at all. He was

always so light and carefree; I guess that I wasn't the only one who hid things well.

"Joey?"

"Hmmm?" he asked, dodging the girl who ran past us in the hallway. She was obviously late.

"Do you think that I could ever meet your family? You talk so much about your little sister, Danielle. She sounds so sweet." And I want to see how you would act without all of these people around.

He laughed. "You may think she is sweet, but to me she is a little pain in the butt. She'll love you though."

"I'll hold you to that," I warned him, leaving him at the door of his class.

"Jaz-" I started to complain.

"Angel," she threatened, "if you move one more time, I will burn you instead of curling your hair."

School hadn't even ended an hour ago and Jasmine was already at my house attacking me with every girly thing that she could find. She was curling my blond hair now and Glenn was coming over in a few

minutes to do my make-up. The poor boy was still jealous that I could wear it and I never did and that he couldn't and didn't. I swear to god that he was going to end up in a salon when he was older and I was his practice now.

"Knock, knock," Glenn sang and swung open the door to the bathroom with a bad in his hand. Well, speak of the devil... and he will come.

"Oh god," I whimpered in horror. "Why do you two hate me so much? You are supposed to be my best friends!"

They both exchanged an evil glance. "We figured we liked torturing you," Glenn sneered and Jasmine laughed.

"Ha ha, hilarious," I mumbled sarcastically, rolling my eyes. Jasmine finished my hair so that it hung in perfect ringlets around my face and then moved onto hers.

They both talked about random things that I couldn't pay attention to longer than a few words until Glenn had finished with my make-up and helping Jasmine

with the finishing touches on hers, he went to get on his tux.

"You're dancing tonight," Jasmine told me the second that he left, cleaning up the mess that was once my bathroom. "You are too good of a dancer not to."

"I will Jaz," I promised.

She stopped what she was doing and looked up at me, dumbfounded. "What?" Jasmine was one of the few people to ever see me dance. Whenever she had forced me to school dances, I would just talk to people and ignore her attempt to get me on the floor. "What changed your mind, Ang?"

"Joey," I said and then headed into my bathroom, not even bothering to explain. I dung through my closet, looking for the accursed dress and set it on my bed. I started to shrug out of my clothes that I wore to school; Jasmine found hers and did the same.

The door suddenly flew open and Jasmine screamed and tried to cover herself, I just stared to laugh. "Glenn, we are only in our bras and underwear, get the hell out," I laughed.

He rolled his eyes at me. "I am gay, girls, so unless you get a sex change, I am not going to care in the least bit. It's the same as changing in the locker in school, unless someone is a lesbian..."

Jasmine peeked her head out of my closet that she had been hiding in. "At least turn around," she said sternly. Glenn scoffed and rolled his eyes, but he turned around anyway. I giggled; I was too much of a tom boy to care if someone watched me change, just as long as there was no lust in their eyes.

I slipped into my soft dress and waited impatiently for Jasmine to finish. "Come on Jaz," I complained, "the dance will be over before you are done." She zipped up the back and stuck her tongue out at me. "Can we leave now?"

"Yeah," Glenn piped up, "I don't want my date finding another guy."

"You found a date?" I asked him.

"Yeah," he grinned, "he is so hot."

"Nice," I said and he gave me a high five, that earned each of us a glare from Jasmine.

I smirked and Glenn shrugged, subconsciously straightening the hot pink shirt under his black tux jacket. I grabbed my coat from my closet then headed downstairs with them following after me. "So how are we getting there?" Glenn asked us.

"My date is driving us." Both Jasmine's and my dates were both a year ahead of us so they could both drive and debated-cough, fought over, cough- who would drive. We watched TV for about five minutes before there was a knock on the door and Jasmine opened the door to find the two boys waiting for us.

Keith's black hair was the same shade as his suit and just a few shades darker than his brown eyes, making him look mysterious. Jasmine's date, a brown hair boy named Sam, was also in a suit. They gave us both corsages, then lead us to the car, Glenn followed silently behind. The three minute car ride to the school was defiantly the most awkward silence of my life. I shifted restlessly.

After what seemed like an eternity, we got to the school and Glenn practically threw himself out of the door, he was really excited to see his date, or the car

ride was just as painful to him as it was for me. We went into the gym, where the dance was held, and entered the streamer filled, winter wonderland, it was truly beautiful. The DJ said something over the microphone and music started to play, the dance had officially started.

I looked around, but I couldn't find Sierra and Aiden or Molly and her date- regardless of the fact that he date was freakishly tall. The first two dances were fast and Keith just talked to some of his friends on the soccer team, but when a slower song came on, I figured it was time to finally put my fears to rest.

"Excuse me boys," I cut into the conversation, "I am going to steal away my date for a song." The guys laughed like I was missing some inside joke and Keith glared at them before grabbing my hand and dragging me away from them. "What was so funny?" I asked him as he wrapped an arm around my waist and I rested my arms on his shoulder.

He grimaced. "They know how I dance."

"How?" I started to ask, but I soon figured two that he didn't just have two left feet, he had more like five, he

was that bad of a dancer, while I on the other hand was gliding gracefully back and forth, keeping it easy for him. The song ended and he almost ran off the floor and back to his friends, keeping a hold on me. The whole reason to take me to this dance was probably just to show me off as eye candy, great.

A few more songs passed and the guys were talking nonstop about some sporting event, I didn't know which though. I liked sports, but I couldn't really concentrate on that now, I wanted to dance too badly. My eyes were wondering when I suddenly saw Joey enter the gym with one of the most gorgeous blondes that I had ever seen.

I was instantly, beyond reason, jealous. Irrationally, I hated her guts on sight.

"Hey Angel," Joey greeted me with the girl's arm in his, she wasn't even up to his shoulder. "This is April, April, this is Angel."

I smiled and shook her outstretched hand; I had to concentrate as hard as I could to keep any detestation from my face. This petit girl looked much

too fragile to deserve it, but that still didn't stop me from feeling it.

"Another dance?" I half-ordered, half-begged Keith.

He didn't hear the desperation in my voice, that or he didn't really care. "In a moment," he waved me off. I was seriously considering killing him in that moment.

"Can I steal your date for a song?" Joey asked quietly.

"Sure," he shrugged.

Joey took my hand and glided me to the dance floor. It was a slow song. He wrapped his arms around my waist, and I shivered regardless of his warmth. My arms were around his neck, not really resting uncomfortably like they were when I danced with Keith, but pulling me slightly closer. "So how did you meet April?" I asked, aiming for nonchalance.

He laughed. "Are you, Angel Adina Soule, jealous?"

I blushed. "Of course not, I was just wondering..." I trailed off, forgetting the rest of my poorly thought out lie.

"I have known her forever," he stated.

Great, how the hell was I supposed to compete with that?

"We're first cousins," he continued, "but we act more like brother and sister. I defiantly like her more than my real sister."

I laughed, my jealously- and my hatred- dissipating. "Nice. I can so feel the love you and your sister share," I said sarcastically.

He shrugged, but he was smiling. We grew quiet as we continued our dance, letting the music flow through us. We danced perfectly together, not missing one step what so ever and anticipating the other's move before they were going to make it. At one point, Joey had spun me around halfway and my back ended up pressed against his hard stomach with his arms tight around me and his chin resting on my shoulder.

"I see that you have gotten over your stage fright," he murmured in my ear.

I shivered again. "To tell you the truth, I actually forgot all about it."

He laughed lightly. "Well I am surprised that you would ever be reluctant to dance, with the way you move..." he trailed off and I felt his hair brush my cheek as he shook his head.

"What?"

"We move so perfectly together." I turned to face him, confused as to what he meant and the tone that he said it in. Since I had had my back to him and his arms were around me, the sudden movement but me very close to him. "So perfect," he mumbled closing his eyes as well as the distance between us.

Chapter 9

Chasing After Love (Chap. 9)

Chapter 9

Joey started to lean in closer to me, his lips only an inch away when someone suddenly bumped me from the side and out of his arms. "Sorry," the girl said and went back to dancing with her date. The interruption sent me back into reality. The slow song had ended and a faster song was starting.

I could have sworn that I heard Joey sigh over the loud music. "I guess my dance is up."

I smiled at him. "I guess so, it was really fun. You're a really good dancer."

"Not nearly as good as you," he disagreed, and I blushed. "I think I should get back to April, so is really shy, I probably shouldn't have left her alone with Keith so long."

My eyes wondered to where Keith had been with his friends. "I think our dates are just fine with being left together," I said wryly when I saw they were in a full out make out mode. I guess she wasn't as 'shy' as Joey thought that she was.

For some odd reason, Joey had this weird smirk on his face, almost as if he had wanted that to happen. "These dances are different from the ones that we have up in Canada."

"Really?" I asked intrigued, this seemed perfectly normal to me. They call it a school dance, but it is mostly just people talking, dancing, or making out, well, it was usually the making out, except for the dateless ones. "What is it like where you are from?"

He shrugged. "I don't know, just different. Oh, and I have a question. How come you can't kiss during school, but all the chaperons don't give a crap now when basically half of the people here are doing it?"

I laughed. "Good luck figuring that out, I am just here to dance. Speaking of that..." I trailed off grabbing his hand and pulling him back into the stream of dancers moving to the faster beat.

Another song ended and April and Keith were no where in sight doing god knows what, but we did end up running into Molly and her date, who's name was something along the line of James or Jason. We, on a spur of the moment thing, invented some dance where we kept switching partners, but Molly and I couldn't stop laughing when the guys ended up as partners and weren't even attempting to dance with one another.

Molly ended up taking her date with the idea of finding Sierra and Aiden somewhere in the crowd, but I doubted that they were going to find them even if her date was taller than most of the people there. It was just Joey and I then.

"So," I said awkwardly. I wished that I could hide behind my hair, but Jasmine had clipped the strands by my face back so that didn't really work.

Joey laughed. "Another dance, mon chérie?"

"You must know me." The dance was another slow one and Joey me closer than her had before.

He was suddenly glaring at something over my head. I turned my head slightly so see that Keith was still making out with Joey's cousin, it was probably the most... graphic kiss that I have ever seen, and I quickly looked back at Joey. It was nasty.

"I really don't like your 'date'," Joey said in a tone that I had never heard from him before, almost hateful. "First, he doesn't even seem to care that you are with him enough to pay attention to you, then he ignored you when you asked him to dance, and now he has practically dropped you for a stranger."

Yeah, I was pissed off from all of that, I hadn't shown it, but I was. I laughed. "Actually I am kinda glad that he said no to the dancing, he really can't dance."

I expected Joey at least to smile, but he didn't let up on his stare down. I was almost waiting for the sound of Keith dropping dead because that is how intense that it was.

His gaze shifted back to me and it was instantly softer. "Sorry, I just get really protective of my gir- good friends."

I blushed, I wasn't used to people watching out for me, and I decided that I liked the feeling. "What were you going to say before friends?" I questioned.

I wasn't the only one blushing tonight because Joey's face turned deep red and he looked around the room. "I had meant to say good, I was just... stuttering."

"Right," I said doubtful. I could have been stubborn, but I just closed my eyes and let the music flow though me. Joey was now struggling a little to keep up with my complicated steps.

The next song was slow too, but I didn't even get to dance before Joey suddenly pulled me tight against his chest. His breathing sounded normal but with my hand around his neck as they were, I could feel his heart beating frantically. "How about we take a break from the intricate dances? I am not sure how much more of that I can take."

"What are you tired?" I playfully challenged.

"No," he murmured, "I just really wanted to do this." He bent his head down and I felt the heat of his mouth on my lips.

An old memory that I thought I had buried years ago pushed its way to the front of my mind.

I was in my old house and it was late one summer night. I was cowering in my room because I was only seven and the raging thunder storm terrified me. I heard the sound of the front door slam and I let out a whimper. Footsteps of a staggering drunk were coming towards my room.

"You really do look like an angel," my 'father' slurred from the doorway. His appearance was sloppy and haggard and the sharp smell of whiskey filled the room, I blinked and my eyes started to water. "You're mom's not home right?" he asked, his voice almost incoherent.

I pulled the covers more tightly around me and shrieked when the thunder boomed, shaking the whole house. "No."

He frowned. "But I need her," he whined. His bleary, bloodshot eyes turned to me and he smiled again. "But you're here and you look so much like her." He stumbled into my small room and with his back to the window, he scared me more than the storm. "I need a woman's touch," he told me. The lighting flashed behind him and I missed the sneer on his face before he launched himself at me.

I jerked out of the terrifying memory and out of Joey's arms in the present. Only seconds had passed, his lips had just barely touched mine before I was gone. My breathing was ragged and tears started to well in my eyes. "I-I-" I didn't know what I had planned on saying to him, but I knew that I couldn't finish it.

I spun around and ran towards the doors. I heard Jasmine call my name, but I wasn't going to stop running. I had to get away, I had to be alone before my breakdown, that was all that mattered.

I ran out of the doors and they hadn't even closed all of the way before I heard them bang open again.

Arms wrapped around my waist and pulled me into them. I struggled for all I was worth. "Let me go!"

I heard a relatively loud swear word from behind me. "I will when you stop trying to kick me in the balls."

I tried laughing but it turned into a sob. "Why do you need them anyway?" I also tried joking, that wasn't working either "It's not like you need them anyway."

"Well if all of my... tools aren't working, I don't think my boyfriend will be too happy," Glenn answered strained. "I am also not letting you go until you calm down."

I took deep breaths, slowly getting control of myself. "You can let me go now," I said hoping to sound calm, the second that he let go, I was going to bolt.

The door flew open again and I heard the click of heels and the clunk of dress shoes. "Angel?" Jasmine's anxious voice rang out. I stiffened and fought the urge to struggle again. "Angel, what happened? Are you crying? Are you alright?"

"Nothing, yes, and no. Let me go, Glen," I hissed.

"No."

I threw all of my weight into my struggle and he lost his grip on me. I had been able to take about two steps before another pair of arms wrapped around me, but these were much more muscled and the heat of them burned me. "Oh no you don't."

I froze and then a shiver racked through me. The tears that still streamed down my eyes fell incessantly down my face and onto his arm. If I had felt guilty- and terrified- around him before, these feelings were intensified now. I tried twisting out of his grip but Joey just held me even tighter.

"It's time that you explain yourself," he told me.

{Author's Note: Well when I first came up with the idea for this story, it was going to originally be the story of my llife, but then i decided that my life is too darn boring so I added a few twists, lol. Angel's acting/ hiding herself is still totally based on me, but the part with her getting... well u'll find out... is not based on me and when I write it, I would like anyone to comment on it to tell me how close that I am. The story is getting more complicated, so please, please

tell me if it still makes sence. Well, please comment and vote. :D

-Katie}

Chapter 10

Chasing After Love (Chap. 10)

Chapter 10

"I have nothing to explain," I cried struggling to get out of his grip again. "Let me go!"

Joey didn't even seem to budge an inch; there was no way that I could get away. "What happened, Angel?" Jasmine's even voice came from behind his back.

When I didn't explain, Joey did. "I tried to kiss her and then... well-" he tighten one hand on me to make a sweeping motion with his hand "-you saw what happened, she bolted for the door, crying as she went."

"I didn't cry," I protested. And I hadn't, not really, I had been close, but I hadn't allowed myself to do that.

I heard the click of heels again as she came walked around both Joey and Glenn to stand in front of me. "You thought of your step-father, didn't you?" she asked horrified.

I chocked on what little breath that I had been drawing in. She still didn't know the whole story, most of the things that he had done to me. I couldn't look at her, I could keep my face a blank mask, but my eyes were a different story. "No," I lied, my voice even. This time instead of struggling, I went limp in his arms and was able to wriggle my way out of Joey's arms. I turned to face them and stumbled a few steps back. "It's my life, I make my own decisions, not have others make them for me," I said, and then I whirled and ran. The only time that I stopped before I got home was to take my Jasmine's high heels off in the parking lot so that I could out-run whoever came after me.

My mom was home when I got back. "Hey baby, you look o beautiful," she told me getting off the couch

and hugging me. She let go of me and her shy blue eyes- the same color as mine- narrowed at me. "Have you been running?"

Thank god that Glenn had used water proof make-up on me. "Nope," I said, my voice normal and cheerful, showing no trace of my lie or the emotional strain that I was in. "I'm tired, so goodnight, mom."

Jessica Soule studied me for another minute before saying goodnight and kissing me on the check. I clutched the bottom of my dress in my fists and ran for the safety of the bathroom. Leaning against the wall, I tried to hold my tears back.

Memories flashed behind my closed eyelids. My 'father' laughing and playing with me, my 'father' teaching me how to ride a bike, my 'father' coming home drunk, him touching me, him making me touch him.... A sob ripped itself from my chest and I fell to my knees. I pressed a fist to my mouth to muffle the broken, dry sounds coming from it. Now that I was alone, they were harder to contain.

I yanked off my dress with short, jerky movements and stepped into the warm water. By the time that

the water ran cold, I had enough control over myself to stop crying. I stepped into some warm fuzzy pajama bottoms and a white tank top before quickly towel drying my hair and stepping out into the hallway to get into my room.

"Angel," my mom called up the stairs, "you have some visitors."

My blood ran cold. I couldn't let them see me like this, totally exposed and no time to build back up any of my masks; I felt raw, exposed. "Tell them to go away." I sounded annoyed... until my voice broke in panic.

"Ignore her," I heard my mom's voice drift up the stairs, "just go on up to her room." That traitor.

I ran into my room and slammed the door. I leaned against it, silently cursing the fact that the only locks in this house were in the bathrooms and the outside doors. There was a knock. "Ang, let us in," Jasmine sighed.

"Hell no." I couldn't keep on any masks, but luckily I could still somewhat control my voice.

"Let us in or else," she warned. I didn't and suddenly the door was opening and I was sliding with it as if I only weighed five pounds instead of a hundred and five. "I warned you," she said as she stepped into the room despite me still trying to push the door back. Glenn slipped into the room and then Joey followed, with him, the pressure stopped.

I would have smashed into the door if Joey hadn't quickly caught me around the waist and into him. "That was you?" he asked amused, "I thought that it was just a pile of clothes."

"Ha ha, very funny," I mumbled and then went to lie facedown on my bed while Glenn sat on my desk chair and Jasmine on the floor. The bed suddenly dipped and I felt a warm hand on my back, stroking my hair.

"Okay, Angel, you're explaining to us what happened tonight," Glenn told me, "and you have no where to run nor are any of us leaving until you get our answers."

I sighed. I didn't think that I could have hidden this part of me forever, but I had to try. "Jaz?" I asked, my hesitant tone muffled by my pillow.

"Yeah?"

"I lied," I mumbled.

"'You tried?' I can't hear you, Angel; you'll have to sit up."

I took a deep breath and sat up, leaning against my headboard with my eyes closed. "I lied," I repeated. "My step-father didn't just leave, that isn't the real reason that I hate him."

"But you said-"

"I lied."

"Hey, wow there, start from the beginning," Glenn said, "us guys are confused and would like to be... un-confused."

My lips twitched, not quite into a grin, even though I had tried to smile at him make-up word. "My birth father married my mom just out of high school and they were both madly in love. They ended up having

me a little over a year and a half of being married. He died in a car crash when I about a year later.

"My mom was devastated, I heard from one of my aunts that she had also been critically depressed for a long time too. She was married again when I was four; I don't know if she married him because she loved him or because then she would have enough money to support me. One thing that she always said that she couldn't bear was giving me up to adoption, losing the only link that she had to her dead husband.

"Kalb was nice at first. He taught me how to ride a bike, play baseball, and took me to watch sunsets along the bay all the time. Besides my mom, the man was practically my idol. It wasn't until I was seven that everything went wrong." My throat constricted and I paused, holding back the emotion that I felt. I opened my eyes a slit, but all I could see were Joey's hands balled into fist, the knuckled white, beside my leg.

"What happened?" Jasmine pressed her voice almost a growl.

I squeezed my eyes tightly shut and ran a shaky hand through my hair. When my hand fell back to my side again, Joey's fingers entwined with mine. He lightly squeezed my hand and I felt a little bit reassured. "He started coming home drunk and the next mornings, he was mean, saying things that were meant to hurt. At first it was only one or two times a week, but then it became closer and closer together until he came home every drunk every night.

"Mom ignored it- probably because he still made it into work and supported us- and I hid in my room whenever he was home. The first time was the worst. There as a thunderstorm and he came home even more wasted than usual, he came into my room asking if my mom was home. When I told him that she wasn't, he whined that he 'needed a woman's touch'. Seeing as I was the only choice, he figured that I would do."

I heard Jasmine gasp, Glenn stop breathing, and Joey's low furious growl. I ignored them and continued, determine to finish before I couldn't. "That first time was also the best, all he did was kiss

me, tongue and all-" I shuttered "-but at least he passed out before he could get any further. He got worse every time that he came home, more and more aggressive. Whenever Mom was gone, he would come almost unnervingly straight to my room. He touched my breasts, normally hurting me, and made me touch him."

"The first time, he told me that he would hurt my mom if she ever found out and from then on, I was terrified of the man who I worshiped. When I was nine, my mom noticed one of my bruises that I had tried so hard to hide, and she refused to believe me when I said it was nothing. She was worried about me that night and came home early. When she heard my wailing, she found my father about to rape me.

"She pulled him off of me and he hit her, the fight didn't last that much longer before he passed out. She called the police and reported him, he ended up being sent to jail for an attempt at rape and child abuse. My mom divorced him and we moved to a different house across town." Tears prickled my eyes, but I fought them.

"I never knew," Jasmine whispered horrified.

"No one ever did. That was when I started my acting. I created masks and hid behind them so that no one would ever know. I never told my mom everything, so you guys are the only ones who know the whole story. No one can ever see the pain that I hid because sometimes the pity in their eyes is worse than the scars that were made. It was a relief that he didn't actually get to rape me because if he did, I don't think that I could ever get past it. I just want to live my life as best that I can, but I know that it will take a while."

"But it's been five years," Joey hissed, "and you are still afraid to let anyone know you. You can't do this on your own anymore. You need help; you have to let us help you! How can it be a life if you are afraid to live it at its fullest?"

"Not much," I admitted flatly. "But scars heal over time, they may not go away, but they heal. I didn't expect to be over it right away, but I am close. I can't let you guys help me because this is something that I have to do on my own."

"We won't let you do this alone anymore," Glenn told me.

"Yeah, Angel, just let us be there for you," Jasmine cut in.

"See Angel," Joey told me, "you don't have to do this alone anymore, we won't let you down." His reassuring tone darkened as he continued. "The bastard should have never tried in the first place."

Tears filled my eyes, both tears of pain at my memories and of relief at having a minuscule of the crushing weight off of my shoulders. "No," I said and then let the tears overwhelm me.

When I opened my eyes again, they were sore and I couldn't see clearly. I looked around the dark room and found Jasmine in a sleeping bag on the floor in some of my pajamas and Glenn wrapped in blankets in the only remaining space on my cramped floor.

I tried to sit up, but something was holding me down around my waist. I felt Joey stir and then pulled me even closer to him. I shook my head trying to remember what happened.

The past few hours slowly came back to me. After I had told them about my step-father, I started to cry uncontrollably. I had just about clung onto Joey for dear life while Jasmine and Glenn were touching my arms telling me that everything was going to be alright and that they would never let it happen again. The last thing that I remember was hanging onto Joey after my tears had finally ceased, I guessed that I had fell asleep.

Jasmine must have made them beds for the night. She had changed, but the guys were still wearing their dress pants and shirts, but their socks were gone.

I wasn't so sure that I felt better having gotten it all out, but at least I didn't have to dread that I would accidentally say the wrong thing and they would figure it out. I sighed again as I settled back down to go back to sleep. I didn't know what tomorrow would bring, however it had to be better than today.

{Author's Note: I have to say that this was a very depressing chapter to write and I am happy that it is finnally over and done with. I got most of the work

done on this because it was finals week at school, so I am... somewhat happy of teachers choosing to torture us all at once, cause it forced me to write. Well, please comment and vote. :)

-Katie}

Chapter 11

Chasing After Love (Chap. 11)

Chapter 11

"You know Glenn, you take longer in the bathroom in the morning than girls," Joey called irritably through the bathroom door. I smiled and Jasmine snickered as the sound of his voice drifted into my room.

"Hey, I can take as long as I want," Glenn answered back, "it's a free country."

That caused both Jasmine and I to start laughing uncontrollably. "God dam- darn it," Joey growled, "you have five minutes and then I am coming in and throwing you out."

"You know that you can swear in front of us," I told him when he stomped back into my room. "We're not that innocent."

His eyes, as soon as they meet mine, went from irritated to concerned in a second. They had all been acting like I would burst into tears by the littlest things ever since I had told them about my past... which is exactly why I never told anyone. "My mom would kill me if I ever swore in front of a girl, regardless of how sick she is, she would find out and I would pay for it. I have had more than enough lectures already, I would rather not have that one."

"I would love to see that," Jasmine mused and sat back so that she was against the wall.

He glared playfully at her and then came to sit on the edge of the bed by us, it didn't slip my notice that he sat closer to me than Jasmine. By necessity, Joey had slept on my bed with me the last night because I hadn't let go of him once I had stopped crying and I don't think that he moved because he was afraid of waking me up. I still wasn't sure that I agreed with Glenn and Jasmine that he liked me, I mean, nothing

that he did ever said that we were anything more than friends. He was just being kind, like he was to everyone, and plus Jasmine had slept next to me all of the time, it was no big deal.

Someone hit my arm and I jumped. "Angel? What do you think?" Jasmine asked me-from her expression and how hard she had hit me- again.

I shook my head. "About what?"

"About what we are going to do today?"

"Uh-"

"Can I break up this little pow-wow?" Glenn asked from the door way.

Jasmine shrieked and I gasped. "Well, he's finally done," Joey said in amusement, "and he also scared the crap out of the girls."

Glenn rolled his eyes and put his hand on his hip. "Just go and shower already."

"Next time you need clothes," Joey told him as he passed him, "don't ask me to get some of mine for you."

When the shower turned on in the other room, Glenn laughed. "God, it is so much fun baiting him."

"That's a little mean, don't you think?" I asked patiently.

He looked over at me and smirked. "Nope." He came over and sat on the bed where Joey had just left from. "I was wondering the same thing.... So what are we doing today?"

I shrugged. "I don't really care just as long as it doesn't deal with you guys fussing over me like I am going to break down again."

"We know," Jasmine sighed, "but you can't expect us to act completely normal when you told us all of that just last night. We'll try to act as normal as possible, but I don't think Joey will do the same, he can't."

"What do you mean?"

Glenn shook his head. "You honestly don't know? For the last time, Joey likes you, Angel. He is angry- not that we aren't- that someone would try to hurt you, angry at himself for not being there to protect you, and won't let you be hurt at all again, no matter how

little. He won't be able to act normal around you for a while, heck, he never will. He likes you, get it through your thick head."

"How could he stop it if he hadn't known me yet?"

"You only latched onto that out of that whole lecture?" he asked in disbelief. "Most guys have a protective nature, that's just how we are when we care about something. It doesn't matter that he didn't know you yet, he feels guilty. Why does someone blame themselves for a loved one's death when they were thousands of miles apart? Emotions don't always have neat little reasons behind them."

"You know that you are deep, right Glenn," Jasmine whispered in awe.

He smirked. "It's a gift." Suddenly, his eyes brightened and he grinned. "I know what we are going to do today. Come on, Jaz."

"Hey," she protested when she was dragged off of the bed. "What are we doing?"

"We are leaving."

"Why?"

"Because, we are giving Angel and Joey some alone time."

"We don't need any alone time," I objected.

"Have fun you two," Jasmine and Glenn both called, taking their clothes from yesterday downstairs with them.

"But-" was all I was able to get out before they slammed the front door on me. I groaned and leaned against the wall. I was starting to get sick of their matchmaking.

"Where are they going?" Joey asked, coming out of the bathroom while drying his hair with a towel.

"They had to leave," I murmured absently.

"They could have at least waited until I was done to say good bye," he mumbled, "I may be new to the group and all, but still," he threw the towel into the hamper and then followed me into my room. "So what are we doing today?" he asked falling back onto my bed.

I was actually a little surprise that he still wanted to stay with me, but I hid that reaction and sat next to him. "Want to go to the park?"

"Sure." He suddenly frowned and sat up. "Are you alright, Angel, I mean really alright?"

I sighed. "I'm fine. I didn't have to tell you guys, but I felt that I had to. If I couldn't have handled it, I would have kicked you guys out-"

"You tried to," Joey interjected.

"and I have been living with this most of my life," I continued, glaring at him a little bit for interrupted me, he smiled and I went on, "I can handle it, Joey. What I can't handle is you guys acting so differently around me."

His expression, which was usually cheerful, twisted into a rage that actually had me a bit scared. "I wish that I could have done something! I-I just wish that I could stop that from ever happening."

Whoa, Glenn was right, I thought. "Joey, take a deep breath, it is over now, and we can't change the past. Now," I said, standing up and forcibly changed my

demeanor from depressed to joyful, "I would like to go to the park. You can stay here if you want, but I am leaving."

Joey frowned at me and looked as if he wanted to continue what we had been talking about, but finally followed me when I dug my shoes out from my closet and started heading downstairs. I knew my mom had already started her shift at the hospital and wouldn't be back until later so I didn't have to stop and explain to her where I was going. I was halfway down the driveway before Joey caught up to me. "Why are we going to the park?"

"I love the park," I told him honestly, "it the only place that I ever truly feel relaxed, like I can be myself. That and there are never any bad memories at the park unless you are a very clumsy child and get hurt badly.

"You know, you're different," he commented and then flicked my ponytail so that it swung back and forth.

"Hey, don't touch the hair," I said in the most deadly voice that I could fake without cracking up. His eyes widened and he actually looked afraid. "See you

there," I said and started running towards the park before I let myself explode into laughter.

"You're going to fall."

I smirked. "You'll catch me."

Joey snorted. "You'll fall on your head first. At least sit up straight."

"I am."

"Right side up. You know what I meant."

I laughed. When I had made it to the park, I had found a horizontal bar and then climbed my way onto it to sit on the top of it. I had scared Joey when he came, when he saw me, I hooked my feet together and then let myself fall back. He had started running towards me and then gave me a lecture on 'scaring the living daylights out of him' when he realized that I was 'safely' hanging upside down.

"You're gonna fall," he repeated again.

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are."

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are."

"Nu-uh."

"Uh-huh." He stalked forward and put his hands over mine and bent down until his eyes were level with mine. "Angel, please come down," he whispered.

I blinked, he was sitting so close to me, I am sure that if I had been upright, then we would have been nose to nose. For some reason, I suddenly had trouble breathing. I looked right back into his eyes and I felt this weird warmth spread through me and I felt like I was melting.

Then I realized how close that he was and I closed my eyes. All of those sensations faded away. As I always did when someone crowded me, I felt my face go blank, completely hiding me reaction... whatever it was. "Go stand behind me," I told him evenly.

He blinked a few times, looking dazed, but then he stood up and did what I said. "Why am I doing this?"

I ignored him. "Grab my hands again. Now, I'm going to let go," I told him once I felt his warm hands close around mine again. I let go of the bar and then twisted my hands to grab onto his so that it was only him and my feet that were still locked around the bar that were holding me up.

"Wait, don't-" he yelled, but I had already let my feet fall. I did a small flip in the air and then landed on my feet, facing Joey, but my arms were twisted up. I let go of his hands, but before I could move anywhere, he had backed me up so that my back was against one of the bars that were holding the playground up. "Don't scare me like that again," he told me furiously.

His anger and his closeness made me fidget nervously. "But I wasn't doing anything dangerous," I protested, my voice only showing my stubbornness and none of my other emotions. "I used to do that all the time as a kid, if I knew that you were going to freak out, I wouldn't have-"

The rest of what I was saying was forever lost when Joey took another step forward and fully closed the

space between us. He raised his hand to trace my tightly closed lips. "I know that, but I was scared anyway."

"You shouldn't have been," I whispered, wanting nothing more than escape.

"But I still was. Don't you realize how much that I like you?" I didn't answer, but he took his answer in the widening of my eyes. "I like you a lot, and I have since I saw you that first day in study hall. Why do you think that I got so mad when you asked that one dude out? I planned against him," he said and laughed gently, "I brought my cousin and we worked out a deal that she would distract Keith, but I think that I am in servitude to her for life."

"B-but why?" I chocked out, too agitated to concentrate on what he said.

"I said that already, I really like you, Angel," he said softly and then leaned forward to touch his lips to mine.

Memories flashed threw my mind in an instant, and I ducked out of his embrace before he could actually

kiss me. "I'm sorry, Joey," I told him, scrambling for an excuse when all of my instincts told me to run. "This is the second time that I have done this. Ducking out before a kiss I mean."

He looked at me somberly. "I am the one who should be sorry, I know that it is too soon for you, Angel, but I just can't seem to help myself."

"Don't blame yourself for what is essentially a flaw in me," I said and then turned and ran home without a look back.

Even through all of my fear and wariness, there was still a part of me that felt horrible for leaving him like that. That part of me also wanted to turn around, go back, and make him finish what he started. That part of me terrified me, but as time went on, it seemed to be getting stronger. I had thought that I could live like normal after a time, but with my past, there wasn't anyone who scared me any more than Joey did. But I couldn't seem to stay away from him.

I was in trouble. Big trouble.

{Author's Note: Sorry that it is kind of a boring/slow/nothing really happens chapter, but I needed to write it. So, anyways.... Please comment and vote.

-Katie}

Chapter 12

Chasing After Love (Chap. 12)

Chapter 12

“What’s three x divided by two times the quantity of six x?” Molly asked me.

“Proof that math should stop trying to find it’s ex, it’s not coming back?” Jasmine tried.

I laughed. I walked over and helped Molly with her math, her new boyfriend-and new as of the night of the dance three days ago- looked grateful that he didn’t have to help.

It was Monday morning and we were all waiting at a lunch table waiting for the bell to ring for first hour.

Molly sat with her boyfriend's arm around the back of her chair while she worked on her homework that was due second hour. Aiden and Sierra were whispering to each other, no surprise there really, while Joey was writing something down with Glenn making the occasional comment, despite Joey's glares.

"What *are* you two doing?" Jasmine asked Joey and Glenn five minutes later when they were still going at it.

" *I'm* writing," Joey muttered. " *Glenn* is annoying me."

Glenn just grinned. "Oh, you know that I could never annoy you, baby," he joked, putting his arm around Joey's shoulder.

Joey threw up his hands. "Okay, I give up!" He got up and moved around to the other side of our table before sitting down again. "Maybe now I can write in piece," he mumbled.

Jasmine smirked and leaned over. "What's t-?"

He groaned and threw up his hands. “Will no one let me write?”

She giggled, but then her expression became serious as she studied the paper. “Joey-”

He flushed then quickly snatched it off of the table. “It’s nothing,” he muttered.

She looked like she didn’t believe him. She looked at me, then at him again. “Yeah, uh-huh.” She looked like she wanted to continue this conversation, but the bell for school to start rang and we all had to go to our classes. We said good-bye to the others then Jasmine, Joey, and I headed off to our study hall class. “We *are* going to finish this conversation,” she told him.

He looked extremely uncomfortable, then he looked away. “Maybe.”

I raised my hand. “Anyone want to tell me what the heck you two are going on about?”

“No,” Joey answered immediately.

Well then, I thought. I would just have to ask Jasmine second hour.

“Okay, spill.”

Jasmine looked away from me. “Uh, I have to go. I’m going to be late for my tech. ed. class.”

“Yeah, *right.* Now, tell me what that was all about.” I grabbed her arm as she tried to take off on me. “Oh no you don’t, you aren’t going to be late. Come on, best friends don’t hide anything from each other.”

“Yeah, but *I* am not really hiding anything, Joey is.”

“Yeah, but I know you and I know from your reaction that that note was about me, and you know about it, so it’s your duty to at least tell me what it’s about.”

“Maybe he should tell you-”

“Jaz, come on, just tell me. I won’t tell him that you told me.”

“Well, Angel, this really isn’t something that I should be telling you-” She broke off at my glare. Sighed. “I’m not going to tell you what it was about, but I am going to tell you this. Don’t you *dare* break his heart.”

I looked at her funny, but before I could say anything, she turned down the hall way to get to her class. I walked the rest of the way to my math class in a daze. *Break his heart?* What was *that* supposed to mean?

“Are you alright?” Joey asked me and that’s when I realized that I was already sitting in my math desk.

I looked up at him and blinked. “Uh, yeah, I’m fine.”

He still looked concerned. “Are you *sure* ? You look a little pale.” He reached out and put his hand on my forehead. With his hand, I felt a rush of warmth. “You don’t seem like you have a fever though.”

I put a smile on my face, it was shaky, but it was still a smile. “I’m just a little shocked. We had the *weirdest* conversation in language class. I will never look at *To Kill A Mockingbird* the same way again,” I lied.

He gave me a look. “Do I even want to know?”

I laughed, relieved that he went with my fake story. “No, not really. One kid had a question, another kid said ‘that’s what she said’ and then it all went down hill from there.”

He laughed. “I always miss the funny moments, don’t I?”

I grinned. “Sometimes.” Once again, I was glad that I was a good actress.

“I swear to god that she hates me,” Jasmine groaned as we walked out of our science class.

I laughed and Joey grinned. “Come on, Jaz,” he said, “now why would she hate you?”

“I don’t know! But she was practically glaring me the entire class, didn’t you see it?”

Joey and I looked at each other. “No, I think that you are seeing things,” I told her.

She muttered something under her breath and threw her hands into the air. “Well I don’t think so. If I fail this class, my parents are going to kill me.”

“You won’t, I’ll tutor you,” I offered.

She groaned again and went back to her muttering.

Joey smiled. “Well I have to go, my dad’s picking me up today instead of the bus. Bye, Jaz. Bye, Angel.” He lightly brushed my hand as he was talking and I

looked down in surprise to see that he had smoothly handed me a folded up piece of paper.

Jasmine looked down at the paper too. “Well, I guess you’ll know what it’s about now. Bye!”

She turned down another hallway and left me all alone.

I didn’t end up reading the note until I was on the bus. I was completely shocked, my brain just shut down.

I don’t know how to say this, I have already rewritten this note about ten times, and I have finally just decided to come out and say it. I love you. I don’t know how to say that any other way. I’m not romantic, not poetic, I’m just me. I know that you probably don’t feel the same, I don’t expect you to. I don’t want this to effect our friendship at all, but this was just something that I had to tell you. I have felt this way practically since I have known you. I want to tell you in person, but I just thought it would be easier for you to tell you like this.

Joey

I laid in bed that night, squeezing my eyes tighter, trying to stop the tears that seemed to fall endlessly down my face. I wasn't sure how much more of this that I could take. I wasn't strong, I never was and I never will be. I just can't handle this, I don't have the courage.

Right now, I felt like there was nothing for me. No one loved me except for my mom and my five friends, besides them, no one else cared what happened to me at all. I was loved, but it was only family love, no one would ever give me anything more than that. I didn't *deserve* anything more than that and other people just seemed to notice it. I deserved to be alone because if anyone ever came to really love me, I would be able to completely love them back, it just wouldn't be fair to them.

Finally, I just let the tears fall freely. I couldn't really be loved like people needed, that thing that went beyond family love. I would never be able to get that and there was no point in me hoping for it anymore. Joey didn't really love me, he just thought he did. It

was high school, you very rarely feel in love then, it was just hormones.

As I drifted off into unconsciousness, I heard a whisper from some long buried part of me. *Someone already loves you like that, it's real. You're letting him go.*

My 'father' looked over at me and smiled. "You're okay, Angel, you're okay. And you won't tell your mom, will you?" he said in that same reassuring tone.

I kept my wince to myself as best as I could. "Why do you do this," I choked out, "you love mom *. How could you do…* this *?"*

Anger flared in his eyes and I really did flinch. He reached down and yanked me into an upright position by my hair. "It's simple. I have no feelings for you, you can never love anyone and no one will ever *love someone as…* pathetic *as* you, *so it doesn't matter what I do to you. You mom may think that she loves you, but that's not really true, no one can love you, and no one ever will."*

My mom's footsteps sounded in the hall and he let go of me, I fell back down onto my bed. When my mom saw me, she ran into the room. "Oh, baby, is your stomach hurting you that bad?" He automatically moved away from me and she sat on my bed.

As she wiped my face, I noticed that I was crying. "Yeah," I whispered. I couldn't tell her the truth. He would hurt her if I did.

"Aw, I know. I hate being sick, the stomach flu is the worst." She smoothed my hair back from my face. "How about I make it up to you, when you feel better, we'll go for ice cream?"

I nodded. "Okay."

She smiled and stood up after handing me a little container of medicine. "Here, drink this, it will help. I'll go make you some soup."

When she disappeared out my room again, I looked over into the face of my step-father. He smiled.

I jerked upright, a silent scream on my lips. I shuttered and pulled my blanket more securely

around myself. I would never be free of him, would I?

Chapter 13

Chasing After Love (Chap. 13)

Chapter 13

My eyes were dry, my voice completely emotionless. "Joey, I read your letter," I started, looking right past his shoulder. I knew what I was doing here and what it would cause, but I knew that I just couldn't see his face and keep my composure. "I had everything that I wanted to say all planned out but I think that it's just better if I be blunt. You don't really love me, you just feel sorry for me or something. It's high school, honestly, very few people ever really fall in love in high school, they just throw out that word because they can't get their feelings straight. If you really think about it, you'll see that you don't love me. You'll also

notice that I'm not even someone who you'd want *to fall in love with. I can't even handle you getting close enough to kiss me."*

"Angel, that's not-"

I held up my hand, effectively silencing him. "Trust me, I know what I am talking about. You'll get over this soon enough, you'll see some other girl and you'll think you're in love with her. You'll thank me one day for not getting your hopes up or anything." I turned and started to walk down the street to my house, leaving a stunned Joey behind me.

I gasped and woke up with a jerk. I felt something wet in the corner of my eye and reached up to wipe the tear from my eye. Crying now was useless. I had already hurt Joey after school yesterday so there was no use in crying about it now. I sighed and got out of bed, it wasn't like I was going to be able to fall asleep again anyway. I had let him go, it was time to start acting like it.

Glenn sighed dramatically when I sat back down in my chair. I looked over at him warily. "Do I really

want to ask what's wrong or will I get a long, drawn out story about your love life?"

Glenn grinned. "Now why would you say that? I only tell you the absolutely necessary parts of my love affairs."

"Sure, you do and Jasmine is so going to be your next date."

Jasmine choked on her water that she'd been drinking. "What?! Leave me out of this!"

Both Glenn and I chuckled.

"So where's your handsome little stray puppy?" Glenn asked a few minutes later.

"What *are* you talking about?"

Glenn sighed as if the answer was obvious. "Joey. Where is he?"

I blinked and tried not to look away guiltily. "I have no clue and why should I know. Oh, and stray puppy?"

He rolled his eyes. "He follows you around like a stray puppy. *Anyway* , you should know where he is.

Do I honestly need to give you a crash course on how to be a girlfriend?"

"He's not my boyfriend!" I practically yelled, then I mumbled, "ignore me," when everyone at the table stopped what they were doing to stare at me.

Jasmine slapped both Glenn and I in the back of the head. "Angel, you are an idiot, and Glenn, you are not helping. If you keep pushing her, you are going to freak her out."

"Freak her out? I only asked a question! And she is so going out with him, she slept with him, he even told her he loved her."

I turned bright red. "Glenn, I didn't sleep with him, you two were there, we all just kind of passed out. And I just don't date, alright?" I purposely ignored that last part.

Jasmine slapped me in the back of the head again, ignoring my 'hey!'. "That was for being an idiot. Ang, can't you see the way he looks at you? And the way you are when you are around him… You two are more than friends."

I sighed. “I just met him, I honestly don’t think that he really has any feelings for me, he-” I broke off, staring at something over Aiden’s shoulder. “See? He doesn’t like me.”

Everyone at the table, who had been listening to our conversation, all turned and looked. Joey was sitting at another table four tables away with talking to a group of jocks with a girl practically hanging off of his left arm.

“That- that-”

“-Bastard!” Glenn finished for Jasmine.

“How *dare* he? He tells you that he loves you and then just to go off with some *slut* ?!” Jasmine raged through clenched teeth. “What? Are playing with other people’s emotions just a some kind of sick game to him?”

“And to think I actually liked him,” Glenn added. “You two would have made a great couple.”

“I’m sorry, Angel,” Molly said to me sincerely. “Obviously he isn’t good enough for you. Just wait, she’ll end up cheating on him and then he’ll come

crawling on back to you and then you can call him every name in the book. If you wanted to, you could get any single guy here to go out with you, so it's *his* lost."

I smiled at her, relieved that I could act like that was nothing. "Thanks, Molly."

The bell rang and everyone headed to their first hour class. I mostly ignored Jasmine as she kept mumbling about what she felt about Joey under her breath. She didn't know that I had turned him down cold last night but I couldn't bring myself to tell her that quite yet.

I know that I should have felt sad, angry, crushed, *something* , but I didn't. I felt numb. I had all but told him outright to get a new girlfriend and forget about me so I guess that I shouldn't really care about any of this. I was too messed up from my past; I just couldn't be what he wanted- no, what he needed. Everyone had said that he wasn't good enough for me, but really, it was the other way around. I was broken, no, *ruined* , there was no fixing me. I may want to be

whole again, but I didn't think that I could be anymore.

Joey was waiting by the door to our study hall room with a wary but welcoming expression but he froze when he saw Jasmine's glare. I don't know what expression that was on his face after that because my eyes only passed him for a moment and even then I seemed to just look right through him.

I didn't look up from my desk the whole period. I just stared at a blank page in my notebook, pretending to write in it so that I wouldn't get in trouble by the teacher for doing nothing.

When the bell rang at the end of class, Joey started to head over to my desk, but I turned my back on him and followed Jasmine out of the classroom.

I didn't talk to him the rest of the day. Every time that I had a class with him or near his room, which was most of my classes, he was right on my heels from until the class started and right after it ended. He tried talking to me a few times, but I never really heard what he said. I really wasn't tracking anything at all today.

He didn't even try to sit with us at lunch. Molly and Sierra tried to cheer me up, but I mostly ignored them, too tired to even act like I was fine like I normally did. I was tired and numb, and at the moment, I really didn't care what everyone else thought about me.

"Angel… Angel… Angel, wait up." Someone grabbed my arm and I stopped, turning to face whoever it was.

The finally bell had just rung and I wanted nothing more than to go home and sleep for a week. I pegged Joey with a blank stare. "What?" The word wasn't spoken with heat, just quietly.

"Come on Angel, tell me what's wrong. Why is everyone acting so weird around me?"

"Nothing's wrong. If you want to go hang out with new people, go ahead. It's your life, do whatever the heck you want with it." I pulled my wrist away from him and he let go of me. "Oh, and it's fine about your new girlfriend, I hope you two are happy. At least you were smart enough to realize that we really would never work out, that stopping whatever it was

before was just saving yourself from some worthless heartache. I told you this would happen; that you would thank me one day." I turned on my heel and walked towards the door.

I thought I heard Joey calling my name behind me, but didn't stop as I walked onto my bus. I flopped down onto a seat and leaned my head onto the seat in front of me.

When I finally got home, I just laid down on my bed, staring at the ceiling. With what I was feeling, whatever that was, it was just too strong to be alleviated by tears, so I just sat there feeling like I was being torn up inside. I don't know quite when it happened, but sometime during the night, I realize that I just couldn't live my life like I had been anymore.

I stood up and looked out the window at the budding dawn. With the way I felt, which I still wasn't entirely sure just what it was yet, I couldn't just let Joey go like this. So what if he had given up on me? If I changed, then maybe I could get him back, maybe I could undo everything that I had said. I fell back onto

my bed. I would just have to figure out how to do that… crap.

About the Author

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